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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Friday, November 11, 1932

FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY

Subject: "Chicken in Cans". Information from the Food and Drug Administration and the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. D. A.

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Time was when, if you were going to have chicken for dinner somebody had to go out in the chicken yard, look over the flock, chase a chicken and finally catch it. Then came the job of picking and cleaning the chicken, and cooking it. But the modern housewife can, if she prefers, buy her chicken put up in a can with most of the work of preparation done for her. This may seem simple, compared to selecting, catching and preparing your own bird, but many different kinds of canned chicken products are now on the market, and the wise buyer needs to know which one will best suit her needs. But she can rest assured--thanks to the protection of the Federal food and drug officials--that the canned chicken she buys today will be wholesome and that the label on the can will tell the truth about the contents.

Just to show you how careful the food and drug officials are to protect you against fraud, here's a true incident that took place back in 1919. The year before, Congress had passed a migratory bird treaty act which made it illegal to sell mud-hens, commonly called coots. But one factory canned some of these mud-hens and packed them in nice brown gravy and labeled them "Salmis of Duck". On the label they put a further statement saying, "Our products are prepared by expert chefs and from fresh and sound stock; this can contains one whole duck". In each can they placed the breast of one mud-hen together with the legs. Then they covered the body of the bird with a dark, meaty-looking gravy. And they started to sell this canned mud-hen as duck in some of the more exclusive stores of our larger Western cities. They even made some shipments to New York.

It wasn't very long before news of this product reached the government's food and drug officials. 431 cases, or 20,768 cans were seized, so about that many American families missed some mud-hen, or canned coot, at the fancy price at which genuine canned duck would sell. So far as I know, at the present time, no canned duck is on the market, but there are plenty of genuine canned-chicken products. You can buy whole chickens, half chickens, boned chickens, potted chicken, chicken livers and chicken fat, not to mention a lot of other products with chicken in them. The Department of Agriculture has an inspection service for chicken-canning plants, and is certifying the product of those manufacturers who take the Government inspection. Such inspection means sanitary conditions in the factory, individual inspection of each bird used, and approved methods and labelling. If you see on the label of a can of chicken the legend, "Inspected and Certified by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics of the U. S. Department of Agriculture" you can be assured that the contents of the can are exactly as advertised on the label and that the birds used were not emaciated or diseased.

In preparing canned whole chickens or half chickens, some packers add a solution of gelatin or agar-agar. This, after cooking and cooling, helps to solidify

the contents of the can and prevents damage from shaking. But the presence of this added ingredient is stated on the label.

Products labeled "Boned Chicken", "Boneless Chicken", or "Sliced Chicken" contain chicken meat sterilized in cans or glass jars. Generally, some chicken fat and skin is also in the cans with, occasionally, some salted chicken soup or broth to moisten the product. In Government inspected plants, at least 90 per cent by weight of the contents will be chicken meat. If gelatine or agar is used to solidify the broth when it is cool and give the contents of the can the appearance of a solid mass when you open it, the label will tell you so. Some packers use a light meat and some a dark meat. The labels usually indicate that fact also.

You can buy "Roast Chicken", packed either in gravy or sauce in cans. The label will make reference to the presence of this added sauce or gravy. In such a product you have a right to expect a mixture of light and dark meat--about as you would find it in a whole chicken.

"Potted Chicken" and "Deviled Chicken" come from ground pieces of chicken, usually spiced. "Chicken Sandwich Spread" generally comes from a mixture of chicken meat and some broth. Sometimes a thickening agent, like rice or wheat flour, is added. In that case the label declares the fact. As for chicken broth and chicken soup, these are by-products made from the liquor in which the chickens are boiled before canning. Usually manufacturers skim off the fat. If such broth or soup contains rice you will find on the label the words "added rice". Besides these products a number of specialty products are on the market, such as "Chicken a la king", "Chicken Chop Suey", "Chicken salad", "Chicken Raviolas", "Boneless chicken Tamales", and "Chicken Tamale Pot Pies". These specialties not only contain meat, but also vegetables, condiments, or other food and flavoring materials, and their names alone show the character of the products.

You may also find upon the grocery shelves cans labeled, "Chicken for Salad". That must be chopped chicken meat without additions. But if you buy a product called "Chicken for salad with celery", or "Condiments", you will find also in the can some celery and other flavoring materials. "Chicken Giblet Sauce" is a mixture of chicken gizzards, livers, and hearts.

All of this just shows that to buy chicken intelligently you need to read the labels.

